



# ask Medicare

## Information to Help You Care for Others



### Dear Family Caregiver:

It's especially important to keep your loved one healthy this time of year - and to **stay healthy yourself**. This issue highlights changes to oxygen coverage, important 2009 dates, and a great Alzheimer's resource. February is heart month, so we've also included tips about preventive services.

We especially **appreciate your comments** on our last edition. Your feedback helps us shape future articles and get you more of the Medicare information you need most. Thank you for all you do!

**Kerry N. Weems, Acting Administrator**

### In this edition:

New Oxygen Rules

Comparing Nursing Homes

1-800-MEDICARE: Don't  
Get Stuck on Hold

Medicare-covered  
Heart Screenings

At Risk for Glaucoma?

Help & Hope for  
Alzheimer's Caregivers

Can You Access Your Loved  
One's Health Records?

Remember to visit  
[medicare.gov/caregivers](http://medicare.gov/caregivers)  
for the latest  
news and updates.

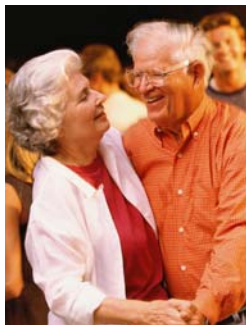
### Coming next edition:

*Spring Cleaning for Your  
Medical Documents*

*Personal Health Records*



### New Oxygen Rules



If you rent oxygen equipment, Medicare payments (and your coinsurance) for this equipment now stop after 36 months. But suppliers are required by Federal law to continue providing oxygen and oxygen equipment for up to 5 years as long as you medically need it, and to keep the equipment in good repair. **The supplier can't charge you anything for these services.**

Don't be misled. Get the facts on the new oxygen rules at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

### Looking for a Nursing Home?



Medicare's **Nursing Home Compare web tool** can guide you through the process step-by-step. Just enter your ZIP code to compare facilities on things like bedsores, safety, and staffing, and use our **new five-star quality rating** to help make a good choice.

Before you choose a nursing home for your loved one, get the facts on nursing homes in your area! Visit [www.medicare.gov/NHCompare](http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare) to get started.

**Tell us what you care about!**  
**Email us at [caregiver\\_comments@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:caregiver_comments@cms.hhs.gov).**



## Don't Get Stuck on Hold

Medicare is here to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). But before you call, check out **Medicare's new tip sheet** - it explains how to make the most of your call and **get the right answers, fast.**

If you're calling for a loved one, know that Medicare can't share their personal information unless your loved one gives permission, either in person or by having a completed authorization form on file. You can find both the **form** and the 1-800 tip sheet at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).



## CAREGIVER TIP

Without a completed **"Authorization to Disclose Personal Health Information"** form, Medicare can't share personal health information, even with family members. Get the form at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

**Do it before you need it!**



## Part B Covers Heart Screenings

You can help lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke with Medicare-covered cardiovascular screenings. Medicare covers tests to screen for cholesterol, lipid, and triglyceride problems every 5 years. **There's no cost for the tests** (but you generally have to pay your share for the doctor's visit).

Take advantage of these screenings and other preventive services - get details at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).



## Could You Be At Risk for Glaucoma?

Glaucoma is one of the top four causes of blindness in the U.S. **Medicare Part B covers glaucoma screenings** once every 12 months for people at high risk, including people with diabetes or a family history of glaucoma.

Ask your doctor if you need glaucoma screening, then visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) to learn more.



## Help & Hope for Alzheimer's Caregivers

More than 5 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's, with an estimated 10 million family caregivers providing daily comfort and care. The Alzheimer's Association offers help and hope through care consultation, referral, and a broad range of comprehensive resources.

**No matter where you live, the Alzheimer's Association can help.** Call them 24/7 at 1-800-272-3900, visit their website at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org), or reach them at local points of service around the country.

Or, take the Caregiver Stress Check: [www.alz.org/stresscheck/overview.asp](http://www.alz.org/stresscheck/overview.asp).

## Medicare Calendar

### Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment: Jan 1 - Mar 31

**What you can do:** All people with Medicare can join, drop, or switch Medicare Advantage Plans. You **can't** add or drop Medicare prescription drug coverage as part of this change.

- Compare plans online at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).
- Call different plans in your area to compare.

### General Enrollment Period: Jan 1 - Mar 31

**What you can do:** Anyone eligible for Medicare can get Part A (Hospital Insurance) or Part B (Medical Insurance).

**Remember, Medicare eligibility isn't based on income - everyone can join.**

**Shopping around may get you better coverage, at a better price.**